

Renewable Resources Extension Act – National Focus Fund Projects

FY 2011 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 6, 2011



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

RENEWABLE RESOURCES EXTENSION ACT – NATIONAL FOCUS FUND PROJECTS

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **CFDA 10.500**.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **June 6, 2011** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division (POD); Office of Grants and Financial Management (OGFM); National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Renewable Resources Extension Act-National Focus Fund Projects (RREA-NFF)** RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the **Renewable Resources Extension Act-National Focus Fund Projects** for fiscal year (FY) 2011 to provide for expanded and comprehensive extension programs for forest and rangeland renewable resources at a national, regional, or multi-institutional level.

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an Appropriations Act for FY 2011. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an Appropriation Act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. It is anticipated that approximately **\$300,000** will be made available to support the RREA-NFF program in FY 2011.

This notice identifies the objectives for RREA-NFF projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an RREA-NFF grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

The Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-306, 92 Stat. 349, 16 U.S.C. 1671 et seq.) provides for an expanded and comprehensive extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources. The majority of the appropriated funds are distributed to eligible institutions based on a formula that considers the geographic extent, ecosystem productivity, economic contribution, and population for each state.

Since FY 2002, a small amount of these funds have been used to fund National Focus Fund Projects which have served to expand comprehensive extension programs for forest and rangeland renewable resources on a national, regional, or multi-institutional scale through better program coordination, innovative technologies, and extension models that can be easily duplicated.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the grant program for FY 2011 is to provide funds for projects that:

- (1) Have national or regional relevance; or
- (2) Build capacity in the Cooperative Extension System to better serve forest and rangeland owners; or
- (3) Develop new and innovative projects that can be replicated at other institutions

NFF priorities include those that have been identified in the FY 2005-2011 RREA Strategic Plan: http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/nre/in_focus/forests_if_rrea.html.

Applications are being solicited for the **RREA-NFF** under the following *priorities*:

Pilot Projects for National Focus Areas/Emergent Issues

The goal of the Pilot Projects for National Focus Areas/Emergent Issues is to enhance the sustainability of the nation's forest and rangeland resources and to enable landowners and managers to achieve their desired goals and objectives.

National focus areas are described in the RREA Strategic Plan for FY 2005-2011. These focus areas, identified through a strategic planning process with the state and federal partners, represent critical issues and/or areas of emphasis that have broad applicability and relevance across the nation at various scales including single- and multi-state to regional scales. These projects provide opportunities for the Cooperative Extension System to maximize its impact and demonstrate capacity and relevance by either indirectly or directly working across state boundaries to bring expertise to bear on common problems. Proposals for the following two (2) focus areas are requested.

(1) eXtension Community of Practice (Forest Farming): Maximum Award of \$100,000

Forest farming, an income-producing agroforestry practice, is the cultivation of high-value specialty crops under the protection of a forest canopy that has been modified to provide the

correct shade level. Crops like ginseng, shiitake mushrooms, and decorative ferns are sold for medicinal, culinary, and ornamental uses. Forest farming provides income while high-quality trees are being grown for wood products. Forest farming practices can be used by forest landowners to grow desirable non-timber forest products on private lands, to supplement family income, and to allow biodiversity to reestablish within forests. The products of forest farming are often referred to as special forest products (SFP) or non-timber forest products (NTFP) and can be categorized as:

- food (e.g., mushrooms and nuts)
- botanicals (e.g., herbs and medicinals)
- decoratives (e.g., floral greenery and dyes)
- handicrafts (e.g., baskets and wood products)
- livestock

Forest farmers, agriculture and forestry professionals, scientists and educators will benefit from a Community of Practice that brings together the current state of knowledge about growing and marketing the products of forest farming. The goal of this focus area is to develop and launch an eXtension Community of Practice (COP) to serve a diverse Community of Interest of private forest landowners.

A Community of Practice (COP) is a virtual network of subject-matter content providers consisting of producers, faculty, professional and para-professional staff, county educators, industry experts and government agency representatives who share knowledge or competence in a specific content area and who are willing to work together over an extended period of time. The COP shares knowledge gained in the form of educational products, programs and electronic interactions with customers (Community of Interest). The COP will organize and work in accordance with established eXtension COP processes and procedures as described at: <http://create.extension.org/node/1363> and utilize the established formats for the eXtension website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to become familiar with the content of this site.

The COP is a joint effort supported by funding from USDA Forest Service. Additional funds may be made available through other sources.

The eXtension Project Team will provide communication and technology support services to the COP. The RREA-NFF funds may be used to support organization and development of the COP. The COP is expected to become “eXtension Certified” during the first 18 months of the project period. Progress reports will be due every six (6) months for the purpose of monitoring progress toward certification. PROJECT PERIOD: 24 months.

(2) Expanding the Reach of Extension: New Techniques and Technologies to Serve Forest and Rangeland Owners: Maximum Award of \$110,000

The reach and effectiveness of Cooperative Extension Forest and Rangeland Resources programs can be expanded by developing and employing techniques and technologies that enable extension educators to reach more forest and range landowners with programs and information and to

provide it in ways that are more effective. For the purpose of this RFA these fall into two categories:

- Peer-to-peer learning – Forest and range landowners reach and connect with other forest and range landowners in ways that professionals are sometimes not able to. Often, landowners have more in common with other landowners than they do with Extension educators and they can be more effective in motivating other landowners to develop management practices that support their goals and objectives. Further, peers who are well-acquainted with forest and rangeland management are able to teach others the basics of forest and rangeland management thus freeing up time for Extension educators to address complex issues of the day. Applications are sought which actively involve two or more states in developing, implementing, and evaluating Extension forest and rangeland peer-to-peer learning programs. This priority can include, but not be solely focused on, capacity building among Extension educators who adopt this approach, but the priority audience must remain on forest and rangeland owners and how to better reach and engage them.
- Social media and electronic technologies – The reach of social media tools and applications has been well-demonstrated in a variety of situations and venues and Extension educators are beginning to use these tools to supplement (not displace) other program delivery methods. There remain numerous and substantial opportunities to use newer methods to reach target audiences new to Extension programs, such as increased use of social media tools, electronic program archiving, webinars, podcasting, and other cutting edge approaches that reach and support forest and range landowners. Applications are sought which actively involve two or more states and which substantially expand an existing delivery method or develop a new media or technology delivery system.

PROJECT PERIOD: 24 months

C. Program Area Description

For FY 2011, it is anticipated that funds will be available for support of the two priorities described in Section B above. The maximum amount that can be requested is **\$110,000**.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an Appropriations Act for FY 2011. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an Appropriation Act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. It is anticipated that approximately **\$300,000** will be made available to support the RREA-NFF program.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2011 **only new applications** may be submitted to the **RREA-NFF** Program. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the **RREA-NFF** Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

The following are NIFA funding estimates for FY 2011, number of awards anticipated, maximum project budgets, and acceptable project periods for the RREA-NFF program area.

Program Area: Pilot Projects for National Focus Areas/Emergent Issues	Funding Estimate FY 2010	Number of Awards Anticipated FY 2010	Maximum Project Budget	Acceptable Project Period
1. eXtension Community of Practice: Forest Farming	\$100,000	1	100,000	24 months
2. Expanding the Reach of Extension: New Techniques and Technologies to Serve Forest and Rangeland Owners	\$211,500	1-2	110,000	24 months

The statutory time limitation for awards issued under this authority is five (5) years. No award may exceed this statutory time limitation.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions. Project Directors are encouraged to have an extension appointment.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be a factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to “Get Registered” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: <http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,**” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-OP-003436** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support

Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. **ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW.** Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, excluding Federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of RREA-NFF.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative. **PDF Attachment. 15-Page Limit.**

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 15 pages (all of which must be numbered sequentially) of written text, figures and tables, regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. The first sentence of the Project Narrative must specifically state the priority for which the application is being submitted. **Applications exceeding the applicable page limit will be excluded from NIFA review.** This maximum (15 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Title the attachment "Project Narrative" in the document header and save file as "ProjectNarrative". **The Project Narrative must conform to the required sections for each priority area, and must be clearly labeled to include all of the sections listed below, as applicable. Incomplete applications, i.e. with missing sections, will be excluded from NIFA review.**

For Priority #1 – eXtension Community of Practice: Forest Farming

(1) Description of the Community of Practice (COP)

- a. COP lead contact information including name, title, eXtension ID, address, e-mail, telephone numbers, and other contact details. The COP lead contact must be a land-grant faculty member or professional staff with an Extension appointment whose institution is in good standing with eXtension.
- b. List of COP Core Leadership members, titles, institutions or business affiliation and e-mail addresses and a description of how the leadership team was formed. The leadership team should include an administrative advisor and a NIFA National Program Leader, an evaluation leader and a communications/marketing leader.
- c. A person should be named that will work in the evaluation and assessment of content. This individual can be a person from any of the institutions represented on the leadership team or a professional evaluator from within the Cooperative Extension System.
- d. A person should be named that will work in the area of communication and marketing. This individual can be a person from any of the institutions represented on the leadership team or a professional communicator from within the Cooperative Extension System.
- e. Description of the COP, including the plan to increase the COP membership. Include a COP leadership and management plan, number of face-to-face meetings, audio and/or Web

meetings planned and methods to achieve the COP's continued productivity. Also, please describe (as applicable):

- Evidence of a national or regional team, as appropriate.
- Geographic representation appropriate to the Community of Interest (CoI).
- 1890/1862 representation (inclusion of 1994 institutions is encouraged).
- Inclusion of institutions of varying resource levels.
- Nationally (or regionally) known key content expertise.
- Efforts to expand Extension's "reach" to underrepresented or underserved audiences.
- Evidence of distinguished content expertise in Extension programming.
- Evidence of prior collaboration by proposed COP members.
- Evidence for inclusion in the COP of other groups (research and teaching faculty, practitioners, commodity, professional agency, private sector, or other appropriate groups), including supporting documentation.
- Plan for development of a functioning and sustainable COP, including leadership plan over time.
- *Note: A proposed COP does not necessarily have to include all of the above to be selected for funding.*

(2) Description of the Community of Interest

- a. Description of the CoI to be served and methods the COP will use to engage the CoI with educational products and programs on a continuing basis.
- b. Description of the scope and boundaries of the audience being served, economic and/or social importance, statement of need or plans to determine needs.
- c. Detailed description of any applicable needs assessment data pertaining to the proposed CoI.
- d. Description of marketability of eXtension products to the proposed CoI.
- e. Where the CoI is internal to Extension, description of the core competencies or other skills important to successful Extension programming to be gained by the CoI.

(3) Scope of Work

a. Scope of Work for the project period. A logic model is recommended to describe the development of a functioning and sustainable COP including inputs, outputs and outcomes (short, medium and long term) for a three-year period. A logic model template can be downloaded at [Logic Model templates](#) provided by University of Wisconsin. Other methods for including inputs, outputs, and outcomes (in lieu of a logic model) can be used but must be fully described. The scope of work should cover the project period, and describe how the COP expects to become "eXtension Certified" within 18 months. The anticipated date of certification and any public launch plans should be stated. The Scope of Work should include detailed deliverables for this time period and associated budget including:

- Creation of published FAQs (minimum of 100)
- Protocol for "Ask the Expert" answers
- Curriculum outline for content
- An estimate of the number of quality, interactive information pages to be created (minimum of 250)

- Teleconferences or Web conferences targeting the CoI
 - Other content deliverables.
- b. Brief description of deliverables for years one and two.
- c. Anticipated date of COP inclusion in [eXtension public site](#)(public release).
- d. Resources currently available to this proposed COP and plans for COP sustainability.

(4) Project Timetable. In graphical form, show a detailed timetable for the project including significant milestones that must be met in order for the project to proceed

(5) Budget. The budget must support the deliverables described in the Scope of Work. Newly forming COPs are encouraged to include the following items in their budget and budget narrative.

- a. Funds for at least one annual face-to-face meeting. An initial meeting should include organizational aspects of the COP, collaboration and team building for COP members, and training on eXtension applications
- b. Salary compensation amount for one or more of the primary investigators
- c. Travel expenses
- d. Subcontract amounts to identified institutions
- e. Evidence of budget sustainability of the COP, including institutional resource sharing plans and institutional contributions, if applicable; availability of outside funding and potential development opportunities

For Priority #2 – Expanding the Reach of Extension: New Techniques to Serve Forest and Rangeland Owners

(1) Introduction. The first sentence must state the priority (from Part I, Section B) that the proposal addresses. The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project. Justify the need for the project by identifying the target audience(s) and explaining their needs. Summarize past activities which substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe the applicant's expertise in the topic and in serving the target audience(s). Justify the reasons for the project to be done at the applicant's institution.

(2) Rationale and Significance. Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. Discuss the potential long-range impacts of the project. Any new or novel ideas that the proposed project offers should be discussed in this section. Demonstrate feasibility of the project through preliminary and current data.

(3) Objectives. Include clear, concise, complete and logically arranged objective statements.

(4) Approach. The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied directly. This section must include:

- a. A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
- b. Explanation as to how the project meets the requirement for innovativeness and regional relevance;

- c. How, when, and where the activities will be provided;
- d. Expected outputs;
- e. Expected outcomes;
- f. A full explanation of materials, procedures, or activities that will be undertaken to enhance the potential for replication beyond the project area;
- g. A brief timeline of the proposed project; and
- h. An evaluation plan for determining the success of the project activities.

(5) Project Timetable. In graphical form, show a detailed timetable for the project including significant milestones that must be met in order for the project to proceed.

PLEASE NOTE: Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the page limit.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

At a minimum, Project Directors are expected to attend and present their projects and accomplishments as submitted papers to the appropriate Biennial Conference of the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (ANREP). Additional conference presentations may also be utilized, but not substituted for the ANREP Conference without approval to do so by the Program Contact. Project Directors should include reasonable costs for conference travel in the project budget.

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name, **Renewable Resource**, and the program code, **ME**. Applications submitted with the incorrect code name or program code will not be considered for funding.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **June 6, 2011** (5:00p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 15 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA (for the Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR) the Program Contacts are specified under subsection 1.5 of the SBIR Program Solicitation) and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in (for competitive programs) the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel or (for non-competitive programs) a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act amended section 1462 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310), increasing the limit on recovery of indirect costs from 20 percent to 22 percent of total Federal funds provided under the award. Therefore, the recovery of indirect costs on awards made by NIFA under this program area may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted prior to award to support the amount of indirect costs requested. NIFA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.”

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application, all of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

(1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on **June 6, 2011**. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. NOTE: The application must be fully loaded into grants.gov before the deadline. Applicants should allow several minutes for this to be accomplished. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.

(2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA.)

(3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff performs precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

For Priority #1 – eXtension Community of Practice: Forest Farming

1. (15 pts) Qualifications of Project Personnel
 - a. The degree to which the key personnel have sufficient experience to lead the proposed project; and
 - b. The identification of appropriate Core Leadership Members, including a university-based Administrative Advisor and a NIFA Liaison who will provide timely and relevant information about eXtension processes and procedures; and all pertinent contact information for the leadership team
2. (20 pts) Description and Operation of the Community of Practice
 - a. The adequacy of the plan to make the COP national in scope and to increase total COP membership; and
 - b. A management plan for the COP that describes the approach to organizing and managing the Community of Practice.

3. (20 pts) Description of the Community of Interest
 - a. Identification of the appropriate Community of Interest to be served by the COP and justification for its selection; and
 - b. Adequacy of plans to engage the CoI with the educational products and programs.
4. (30 pts) Scope of Work
 - a. Adequacy of the scope of work to accomplish the project objectives of developing and launching the content on eXtension.org
 - b. The degree to which the scope of work is feasible for accomplishing in the given time period; and
 - c. Contains sufficient detail for accomplishing all work products.
5. (10 pts) Resources – Description of additional resources available to this proposed COP
6. (5 pts) COP Sustainability – Adequate description of plans for sustaining the COP after the funding period.

For Priority #2 – Expanding the Reach of Extension: New Techniques to Serve Forest and Rangeland Owners

1. (35 pts) Project Merit
 - a. Proposed objectives and outcomes are clearly described, adequate and appropriate;
 - b. Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies are innovative, original, clearly defined and feasible; and
 - c. Expected outcomes are clearly stated, measurable and achievable.
2. (35 pts) Project Relevance
 - a. Adequacy of proposal response to items required in the Project Narrative;
 - b. Stakeholders and partners play an active role in setting project direction;
 - c. Planning and implementing methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes; and
 - d. Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary and current data.
3. (30 pts) Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management
 - a. Roles of key personnel, and their expertise are clearly defined.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PD's chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions.

At a minimum, Project Directors are expected to attend and present their projects and accomplishments as submitted papers to the appropriate Biennial Conference of the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (ANREP). Additional conference presentations may also be utilized, but not substituted for the ANREP Conference without submitting a specific request to do so and receiving approval by the Program Contact.

Additional annual reports may be requested to provide timely information for the Secretary of Agriculture and Congress. The agency contact (Part VII) will request additional reports as needed.

Any additional reporting requirements will be identified in the terms and conditions of the award (see Part VI, B.9. for a link to view the NIFA award terms and conditions).

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Eric R. Norland, National Program Leader, Forest Resource Management; Natural Resources and Environment Unit: telephone: (202) 401-5971; E-mail: enorland@nifa.usda.gov

or

Dr. James Dobrowolski, National Program Leader, Rangeland and Grassland Ecosystems; Natural Resources and Environment Unit; Telephone: (202) 401-5016; E-mail: jdobrowolski@nifa.usda.gov.

The fax number for both contacts is: (202) 401-1706.

Mailing address for both contacts: National Institute of Food and Agriculture; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definition is applicable:

Rangeland is land on which the native vegetation (climax or natural potential) is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs or shrubs suitable for grazing or browsing use. Rangelands include natural grassland, savannas, most deserts, tundra, alpine plant communities, coastal marshes, wet meadows and introduced plant communities managed like rangeland.